

BAA Introductory Acting 11

District Name: Coquitlam
District Number: SD #43
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School Name: Gleneagle Secondary
Principal's Name: Dave Matheson
Board/Authority Approval Date: April 20, 2004

Board/Authority Signature:



Course Name: Introductory Acting

Grade Level of Course: 11

Number of Course Credits: 4

Number of Hours of Instruction: 120 hours

Prerequisite(s) :None

Special Training, Facilities or Equipment Required: A comfortable rehearsal hall/performance space with basic lighting, sound, drapery, and staging equipment is desirable. The teacher should be experienced and motivated, and committed to leading shy young actors through the training, rehearsal, and performance process.

Course Synopsis:

The main goal of this course is to give very inexperienced and inhibited actors the confidence to perform plays on stage in front of audiences. Students will learn that they can perform successfully through purposeful and trained engagement of the imagination coupled with technically competent voice and movement work. They will learn that focussed immersion in the work of creating "the world of the play" reduces or eliminates self-consciousness, and thus frees the actor from the inhibitions that cause stilted, artistically untruthful performances. Students will learn to trust that audiences respect artistic truth and are actually allies in the willing suspension of disbelief that enables theatre to take place. They will learn one of that, paradoxically, the actor *includes* the audience by *excluding* the audience. They will learn that the rehearsal and performance of scripted plays are actually very safe public activities, providing a high degree of structure in which the emotional, intellectual, and physical safety of the performers is carefully supported so as to free them to take artistic risks.

Rationale:

This course is designed for students who have an interest in acting, but who are inhibited from taking senior level acting courses due to their fear of facing audiences, and/or their lack of training and experience.

Some students who want to act have difficulty overcoming their shyness. Others have been unable to take Drama 9 & 10, or have missed the opportunity to participate in extracurricular plays, and therefore lack the confidence to take Theatre Performance 11 & 12 alongside their more experienced peers.

Introductory Acting 11 provides a gentle entry into the world of acting, equipping students with the knowledge and skills that will enable them to overcome their performance anxiety and perform confidently as characters in plays shown to audiences.

School District 43 is dedicated to ensuring quality learning through the creation and maintenance of a safe and nurturing intellectual, physical, and emotional environment. This course strives to create such an environment, wherein the emotional, intellectual, and physical safety of the participants is paramount. Within this environment, students will be challenged to reach beyond their inhibitions and self-imposed boundaries in order to create collective expressions of beauty and truth through the medium of theatre.

Students will learn to enhance their success as actors through developing their capacity for empathy, and by deepening their understanding of the human condition, thus honouring the district's emphasis on tolerance for pluralism and multiculturalism.

Organizational Structure:

Unit/Topic	Title	Time
Unit 1	Public Solitude: Invoking the Imagination	10
Unit 2	Creating a Simple Story on Stage	20
Unit 3	Creating a Purposeful Character	30
Unit 4	Defining and Building Character Relationships on Stage	20
Unit 5	Rehearsing and Presenting Plays to Audiences	40
Total Hours		120

Unit/Topic/Module Descriptions:

Unit I:Public Solitude: Invoking the Imagination

10 hours

Students will learn to exclude their immediate surroundings, including other people, through focussed use of their imaginations. They will learn to be "alone in a group" thus overcoming the distractive and inhibiting powers of their peers and surroundings.

Curriculum Organizer - Conceptual Learning

It is expected the student will:

- demonstrate an understanding of the concept of "public solitude" (the ability to apply concentrated focus on imaginary phenomena while in the presence of an audience).

Curriculum Organizer - Skill Development

It is expected the student will:

- develop an understanding of the capacity to visualize imaginary settings, characters, and situations
- develop an understanding of the capacity to interact physically, vocally, and sensorially with these imaginings.

Curriculum Organizer - Practical Application

It is expected the student will:

- enter, in front of an audience, a state of physical stillness in which he/she is focussed on inner imaginings.
- execute, in front of an audience, vocal and physical actions in response to imagined circumstances.

Unit 2: Creating a Simple Story on Stage**20 hours**

Students will learn to understand the basic structural elements of theatrical "stories" and unify and apply these elements in scene work on stage so as to gain confidence and certainty through knowledge of the way in which actors analyze stories and apply their analysis to the acting process.

Curriculum Organizer - Conceptual Learning

It is expected the student will:

- demonstrate an understanding of the concept of "context" (or "given circumstances"), including setting, mood, and prior events that inform the scene.
- demonstrate an understanding of the concept of "character" (the entities engaged in the events in the story)
- demonstrate an understanding of the concept of "action" (the physical actions that reveal the conflict and drive it towards some form of resolution).
- demonstrate an understanding of the concept of "theme" (a generalization about the human condition that can be derived from an analysis of the story)

Curriculum Organizer - Skill Development

It is expected the student will:

- apply basic scene-analysis techniques based on his/her understanding of the structure of a story, including the following:
 - o determining the story that will be revealed by a scene
 - o determining relationships (the roles the characters play in each other's lives within the scene)
 - o establishing status (the level of power and/or authority of each character in relationship to the others)
 - o determining stakes (that which the characters see as deeply important and worth fighting for, and capable of generating strong motivation in the scene)
 - o determining objectives (the changes the character wants to effect on other characters with whom he/she is in relationship in the scene)

Curriculum Organizer - Practical Application

It is expected the student will:

- participate actively and confidently in scene analysis with other actors.
- rehearse a scene with other actors with the confidence that comes from understanding the structural elements of the story.

Unit 3: Creating a Purposeful Character**30 hours**

Students will learn how to create simple character bodies and voices so as to be released from the inhibiting sense of "self" They will learn how to establish effective objectives for their characters so as to have clear, purposeful, and confident actions to carry out while on stage.

Curriculum Organizer - Conceptual Learning

It is expected the student will:

- demonstrate an understanding of the importance of the clear, specific, and economical use of the voice and body in representing a character.
- demonstrate an understanding of the desirability of having strong objectives so as to have a clear purpose for every moment on stage, thus overcoming personal inhibition and reducing the distractive powers of the stage/audience environment

Curriculum Organizer - Skill Development

It is expected the student will

- develop basic technical competency in the following areas:
 - o alignment (the ability to establish a neutral, balanced body posture)
 - o breathing (the ability to use abdominal/lower rib breathing technique so as to have adequate air reserves to support voice and movement)
 - o vocal projection (the ability to relax the throat, and to control volume through the combination of air flow, resonance, and size of the vocal aperture)
 - o vocal enunciation (the controlled use of the tongue, teeth, lips, and lower jaw for the purpose of moulding sound into clearly pronounced words)
 - o stillness (the ability to achieve a quiet, relaxed body for the purpose of establishing a base from which to execute strong, simple physical actions)
 - o economy of movement (the ability to clarify and simplify movements and stillnesses in order to create effective and easily understood body language)
 - o simple blocking (theatrical "cheating" of body positions, avoiding masking other actors, logical use of the stage space to clearly reveal a scene to an audience)
 - o executing an objective (attempting to get a desired response from something or someone with whom the actor's character is in relationship).

Curriculum Organizer - Practical Application

It is expected the student will:

- apply technical skills during rehearsals of scenes and presentation of plays to audiences

Unit 4:Defining and Building Character Relationships On Stage 20 hours

Students will learn the importance of character relationships in scenework, and the responsibilities actors have towards fellow actors in terms of actions and reaction, and empathetic listening for the purpose of strengthening the artistic truthfulness and immediacy of a scene. They will learn that entering into effective character relationships during rehearsal and performance reduces inhibition and self-consciousness.

Curriculum Organizer - Conceptual Learning

It is expected the student will:

- demonstrate an understanding that an actor is either acting or reacting at all times during a scene
- demonstrate an understanding that an actor must place all his/her attention on the actor who holds the focus
- demonstrate an understanding that an actor "listens" with all his/her senses to other actors during performance, so as to be able to understand and respond to the nuances of emotional, intellectual, and physical messages conveyed by the actors.
- demonstrate an understanding that immersion in the work of acting/reacting and empathetic listening helps the actor avoid the distractions that inhibit his/her performances

Curriculum Organizer - Skill Development

It is expected the student will:

- demonstrate the ability to react to another actor's words and actions
- demonstrate the ability to remain focussed on another actor consistently
- respond to another actor's performance truthfully through careful sensorial observation of the other actor
- demonstrate increased ability to overcome personal and environmental distractions through immersion in character relationships

Curriculum Organizer - Practical Application

It is expected the student will:

- enter into character relationships during rehearsals and performances
- remain focussed on other actors throughout a performance
- reduce self-consciousness and inhibition through immersion in character relationships during performances

Unit 5: Rehearsing and Presenting Plays to Audiences**40 hours**

In order to demonstrate they have learned effective strategies to overcome performance anxiety, inhibition, and lack of confidence, students will prepare and present a full class/cast performance to a live audience through three weeks of rehearsal (approximately 18 hours) and one week of presentation (approximately 7 hours). It is recommended that students be given a script prepared by the teacher so as to balance the right mix of challenge and ease-of-performance. In the interest of sharing the weight of performance, the teacher might find it advantageous to configure the script to ensure that each member of the class will carry relatively equal levels of responsibility, so no single member of the class must "carry" the show.

Curriculum Organizer - Conceptual Learning

It is expected the student will:

- demonstrate an understanding of the application of basic theatre ethics to the rehearsal and performance process
- demonstrate an understanding of the importance of regular attendance and participation in rehearsals and performances
- recognize the importance of remaining focussed and on-task during rehearsals and performances
- demonstrate an understanding of the importance of "controlling the controllable", such as memorizing lines, cues, and basic blocking, as well as care and use of costumes, props, and accessories.
- experience the rehearsal process, from initial reading of the script through to final performance.
- learn the three stages of performance (pre-show preparation, performance, and post-performance closure)

Curriculum Organizer - Skill Development

It is expected the student will:

- uphold physical, emotional, and creative/intellectual safety during rehearsals and performances
- remain on-task and avoid the pursuit of social agendas while participating in rehearsals and performances
- display tolerance about fellow actors so as to foster an effective, purposeful, and nurturing creative climate
- demonstrate absolute commitment to the principal of never using the power of the stage for the purposes of abuse, bullying, derision, or demeaning of others
- demonstrate that he/she can memorize cues, lines, and basic blocking
- demonstrate the ability to use and care for costumes and properties
- exhibit self-discipline during every stage of the rehearsal process
- demonstrate a disciplined commitment to the three stages of performance (warm-up, performance, closure)

Curriculum Organizer - Practical Application

It is expected the student will:

- participate willingly in the rehearsal and performance of a play involving the whole class/cast
- demonstrate increased confidence during rehearsal and performance through the use of effective acting strategies

demonstrate the use of appropriate theatre ethics and behaviour so as to facilitate effective teamwork in pursuit of the collective creative goal of an artistically truthful performance

Instructional Components:

Examples of learning activities for this course include:

- breathing exercises, led by the teacher
- physical alignment exercises, led by the teacher
- sensory awareness exercises, led by the teacher
- vocal development exercises, led by the teacher
- solo performance work designed to invoke the imagination
- solo performance work designed to enable actors to create complete theatrical "stories"
- working in pairs in improvisation exercises that enable actors to experiment with key acting concepts and skills, including:
 - o listening
 - o establishing objectives in a scene
 - o determining stakes in a scene
 - o determining status in a scene
 - o defining relationships in a scene
 - o making discoveries in a scene
 - o working with emotional "opposites" in a scene

Most learning activities in this course are performance-oriented, and are designed to lead acting students skillfully towards the main purpose of the course.. ..performing with confidence in front of an audience. Students are constantly experiencing performance in some way.. ..the acting exercises require performance in order to experiment with various skills and concepts.. ..these exercises are always followed with discussion about the student' experiences during the exercises. Members of the class often perform simultaneously.. ..at other times, some members of the class will perform for other other members, in various groups and combinations, thus creating various types and levels of "audience" in order to familiarize the actors with the experience of being watched.

The rehearsal process takes performance to a new level. The class works together on rehearsing a theatrical presentation. Typically, rehearsal involves a series of steps:

- reading and discussing the script
- doing a "walk-through" of the play so as to identify blocking requirements
- refining choices of style and presentational technique
- refining the play through repetitive rehearsal and classic rehearsal techniques
- initial performance for a small group who provide feedback and encouragement

Performances are designed to empower actors by making them aware of their responsibility for making effective choices that are effective for themselves, their fellow actors, and the audience. Students are encouraged to understand that, in order to entertain the audience, they must entertain themselves. Students are repeatedly encouraged to take "ownership" of their work.. .to understand that the director provides the "form", and that they provide the "content".

Assessment Component:

- Effective formative assessment via:
 - Clearly articulated and understood learning intentions and success criteria
 - Questions posed by students, peers and teachers to move learning forward
 - Discussions and dialogue
 - Feedback that is timely, clear and involves a plan
 - Students are resources for themselves and others – peer and self-assessment
 - Student ownership

Formative assessment used to adapt learning experiences and inquiry plans on an on-going basis to meet specific learning goals.

Development, awareness and action, based upon metacognition intended to lead to learner independence and self-coaching.

Summative Assessment:

Summative assessments will be determined as students demonstrate proficiency/mastery toward particular learning outcomes. Summative assessments and final grades will reflect the following:

- Students will work collaboratively with the teacher to determine summative achievement on assignments and letter grades based upon dialogue, and evidence of learning
- Behaviour and work habits will NOT be included when determining letter grades
- Marks will not be deducted for late work
- Extra credit and bonus marks will not be awarded
- Plagiarizing will not result in reduced marks/grades –the student will be required to demonstrate their learning authentically
- Attendance will not be considered toward letter grade
- Only individual learning demonstrated –no group marks – will be used to determine grades
- Letter grades will reflect learning towards the learning outcomes articulated above
- Letter grades will be based upon criteria provided/agreed upon toward the learning outcomes
- Letter grades will be determined in relation to the learning outcomes – not in comparison to the achievement of other students
- Poor work will not be assessed towards grades – students will only be assessed on quality work
- Professional judgment and evidence will be used to determine final letter grade in consultation with the student
- Zeros will not be assigned to missed assignments – all required assignments must be completed
- Formative or practice towards learning outcomes will not be included in final grade assessment
- Most recent evidence toward learning outcomes will be used to assign letter grades – learning is not averaged over time

- Imagination: with what degree of ease is the student capable of entering into imaginary circumstances?

Those who exhibit behavioural difficulties beyond the norm for the group during the initial stages of the course receive careful remediation.

B: Ongoing Student Evaluation:

Students are evaluated on an ongoing basis in three key ways:

- their ethical behaviour is constantly monitored.. .as trustworthiness is fundamental to the success of each actor, and the success of the class
- their work during regular acting exercises and rehearsals is monitored, with the teacher noting the degree of success with which each student masters the exercises and rehearsal requirements.
- their work during actual performances in front of live audiences is evaluated (the response of the audience to the work of the cast or individual actors is a measure of individual and group achievement, and the teacher observes and makes notes about each actor's performance.)

Evaluation techniques include:

- observation and note-taking
- constant solicitation of feedback and commentary from the students in the course
- the solicitation of feedback from audience members (teachers and students from other classes) who have been invited to watch performances
- providing students with self-evaluation checklists, with room for commentary on key areas of concern or focus.
- the use of careful professional judgment in assessing each student's level of capability at the beginning of the course, and repeating the assessment as the course progresses in order to note the rapidity and extent of the student's growth as an actor.

During the course, the actors will present formal performances. At this time, the teacher will be able to observe and note the extent to which each student has progressed during the course by comparing the student's formal performance work with earlier evaluations.

An important aspect of ongoing and final evaluation includes self-evaluation. On a regular basis, students are asked to comment on what they are learning. They are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning, and are constantly reminded that they must "teach themselves" ..the teacher provides the opportunity to learn, but the student must utilize the opportunity. The teacher frequently seeks input from the students to monitor whether or not this "self-teaching" is taking place.

C: Evaluating Performances:

There is an old saying in theatre: "The stage doesn't lie." Another way of saying this is, "What you see is what you get." Actor training of the type offered in this course involves the creation of a "product": public performances of scenes or plays. The quality of the product is evident to the audience. The teacher (a highly trained audience member who is deeply involved in the creation of the product) is in a key position to evaluate the level of quality of the production in a number of extremely important ways:

- the strength and weaknesses of the teacher/director's choices in helping shape the performance, and in providing a comfortable yet challenging vehicle for the actors' growth
- the quality of the overall ensemble performance
- the quality of individual performances within the larger performance
- the nuances of audience response to the performance, both during and after the show
- the evidence of growth in individual actors
- the ways in which a particular performing style challenges individual actors (ie. some actors respond well to improvisational theatre, some to highly structured, scripted work, some to large-scale ensemble work, some to small-group scenework.)

D. Final Evaluation of Students:

By the completion of this course, students are expected to understand and practice the ethical/behavioural objectives of the course. They are also expected to understand and apply basic conceptual and skill-based approaches to overcoming their fear of performance in front of an audience.

Central to the philosophy of evaluation in this course is the belief that each actor deserves to be measured in terms of personal achievement, rather than in comparison to the group. The teacher must be vigilant and alert to signs of growth in each actor, and must be especially alert to the specific issues each actor struggles with in his or her effort to become more skillful on stage. The teacher must assist each student with his or her specific acting problems, and must carefully note signs of increasing competency and mastery of these problems.

E: Teacher Journal:

It is recommended that the teacher keeps a detailed daily journal of the course, entering notes about each lesson, including:

- what was taught
- what exercises and strategies were used
- how the students responded to lesson
- areas of concern the teacher needs to address.

The journal helps the teacher evaluate the degree of success with which the students are learning the outcomes, and the level of effectiveness of specific lessons.

F: District Drama LSA:

Through the District Drama L.S.A., the teacher is able to maintain contact with fellow specialists, and to exchange notes and ideas about course goals, learning outcomes, and evaluation.

G. Professional Development:

Professional development opportunities help the teacher keep abreast of developments in the field of acting and also assist the teacher with ways to modify the course and improve the instructional methods.

H. Parental Feedback:

Feedback from parents of students is another part of the process by which the teacher forms an understanding of the effectiveness or limitations of the course and the achievements of individual students.

I. Evaluating Teacher Success:

One important key to determining the success of course content and organization is the observation of individual and group evolution within the class. As the course proceeds, the students ought to "invest" or "buy into" the process...if this does not occur, or is not consistent, content and organization is adjusted accordingly.

Another measure of success in this area, in an elective course such as this one, is the enrolment numbers each year. If enrolment numbers fall, it may be attributable to weaknesses in organization and content.

In this type of course, the success of the teaching is measured by the success of the students' artistic accomplishments during performances.

Success can also be measured by monitoring the attitudes and demeanour of class members during regular lessons. Manifestations of boredom and inattentiveness are signs that strategies are not working, or that organizational techniques are failing.

The teacher works to establish a very specialized learning climate in an acting class. The rituals and rules, the principles and ethics, and the flow of the lessons, the tone and atmosphere, all must support the goals of the course. Because the key goal is "successful performance of a scene or play", that performance becomes a major measure of the success of the teacher's strategies and organization.

Learning Resources:

In an introductory acting course, the primary learning resource is a comfortable rehearsal hall and an experienced, motivated teacher.

Experienced acting students can be invited to visit the class on an ongoing basis as another valuable resource. They are able to share their experiences and knowledge with the beginner actors, thus supporting the work of the teacher.

Once a year, there is a multi-district drama festival (Metfest). Students in this course are invited to attend Metfest to learn by watching fellow actors struggle with the problems of staging one-act plays.

Students are encouraged to attend play performances of all kinds...secondary school plays, community theatre productions, and large and small professional productions.

Texts are not essential for an introductory acting course, but students are encouraged to read relevant material on acting, such as Konstantin Stanislavsky's "An Actor Prepares" and Michael Shurtleff's "Audition".

Additional Information:

The course is designed for students who....

- require a fine arts credit for graduation
- have little or no acting experience at the secondary level
- are interested in acting, but feel inhibited by their lack of experience and/or their fear of facing audiences

Why is there a need for this course?

Many students do not take Acting 11 and Acting 12 because they lack the confidence and training provided by lower level drama courses.

Other students would like to try acting, but feel inhibited by the risks. They need a carefully structured introductory course in order to develop strategies to cope with performance anxiety and stage fright.

Though the middle schools provide valuable developmental drama experiences, they do not offer the intensive, extended, and highly focussed actor training of the kind provided at the secondary level. This new course provides a clear and specific introduction to formal actor training for students who have missed the opportunity to take Drama 9 or 10.

How have teachers, pupils and parents been consulted on the need for the course?

Many students have stated that they would like to try acting, but feel intimidated due to their lack of formal training and experience.

Still others state that they've always been attracted to acting, but have never been able find the confidence to face audiences.

Teachers mention students who express interest in acting, and could benefit from actor training, but who are not in the acting program due to self-doubt.

The administration agrees that another fine arts option would be useful for students in grades eleven and twelve. They also understand the desirability of an introductory acting course at this level, as Acting 11 and Acting 12 are both courses that work best for students with prior experience in acting.

Parents can appraise themselves of this course in the new course planning booklet, and consult with their children about the desirability of opting for the course.